

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 02561 291531Z

46

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02 CIEP-01

LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CU-02 PC-01 OES-03 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-06 AGR-05

STR-04 NEAE-00 /096 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8901

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2561

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR TS US

SUBJ: US - TUNISIAN JOINT COMMISSION (JC)

REF: STATE 93073

1. BEN REDJEB, CHIEF AMERICAN DIVISION, MOFA, INFORMED US THIS MORNING THAT GOT WILL NOT RPT NOT HAVE AN OFFICIAL REACTION TO OUR CONCEPT OF INAUGURAL MEETING OF JC SCHEDULED FOR MORNING OF MAY 2. CHARGE TOLD BEN REDJEB THAT IN THAT CASE HE INTERPRETED GOT LACK OF REACTION TO MEAN THAT GOT IS PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH FORMAT AND CONTENT OF INAUGURAL MEETING AS PROPOSED REFTEL. BEN REDJEB SAID HE BELIEVED THAT WOULD BE CORRECT INTERPRETATION.

2. WE BELIEVE THAT IS WHAT IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN, BUT WE ARE LESS CONFIDENT THAT TUNISIAN DELEGATION WON'T MAKE SOME LAST MINUTE EFFORT AFTER ARRIVING IN STATES TO SUGGEST CHANGES, SPECIFICALLY EITHER TO LENGTHEN THE SESSION OR INTRODUCE AT LEAST ONE OTHER AGENDA ITEM. PROBLEM HERE HAS BEEN THAT GOT HAD ONLY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 02561 291531Z

RELATIVELY SHORT TIME TO FOCUS ON OUR CONCEPT OF

MEETING EVEN THOUGH CONCEPT FOLLOWED CLOSELY TENOR AND SUBSTANCE OF VARIETY OF CONVERSATIONS WE HAVE HAD ON SUBJECT WITH RESPONSIBLE TUNISIANS OVER PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS. DECISION MAKERS SUCH AS FONMIN CHATTI WHO WAS AWAY AT TIME REFTEL ARRIVED MAY NOT HAVE EVEN HAD OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON MEETING BEFORE THEY WERE OFF AGAIN. WE THEREFORE HAVE FEELING THAT LACK OF REACTION PRIMARILY REPRESENTS LACK OF TIME TO ARRIVE AT CONSENSUS.

3. WE NONETHELESS HAVE HAD UNOFFICIALLY ONE OR TWO REACTIONS INDICATING SOME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE SHORTER THAN SOME TUNISIANS ANTICIPATED, AND THAT AGENDA IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY COMPREHENSIVE. THUS, BEN YAHIA, ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (DCI) IN MOFA, TOLD EMBOFF THAT TUNISIANS WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT AGENDA DID NOT INCLUDE AN ITEM ON TUNISIAN DEVELOPMENT. DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE HAD BEEN KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP SINCE 1956 AND DEVELOPMENT IS AN ITEM THAT OBVIOUSLY IS CENTRAL TO GOT POLITICAL STRATEGY. GOT HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT REVERSING TREND IN US ASSISTANCE, AND WOULD CERTAINLY NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INAUGURAL JC TO SEEK NEW ASSISTANCE. THIS REACTION WAU NOT, HOWEVER, PLAYED BACK TO CHARGE BY BEN REDJEB, ALTHOUGH BEN REDJEB DID SAY THAT WE COULD ACCEPT IT AS A KIND OF "UNOFFICIAL REACTION." (CHARGE HAD PREVIOUSLY TOLD HIM THAT IF TUNISIANS DID WAKT TO COVER THIS SUBJECT, PRESUMABLY THERE WOULD BE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO IN TUNISIAN RESPONSE TO US PRESENTATION UNDER AGENDA ITEM (A) "OVERALL REVIEW OF US-TUNISIAN RELATIONS"). BEN REDJEB ALSO SAID THAT PRIMIN'S BRIEF AIRPORT REMARKS CONCERNING ECONOMIC RELATIONS, DEVELOPMENT MATTERS AND TECHNICAL AID (TUNIS 2508) COULD BE TAKEN AS AN INDICATION OF WHAT TUNISIANS HAD ON THEIR MIND, BUT HE STOPPED SHORT OF SAYING THAT EHEY WOULD ACTI ALLY RAISE THEM IN JC.

4. IT THEREFORE OUR IMPRESSION THAT TUNISIANS LEFT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 02561 291531Z

HERE NOT KNOWING FOR SURE WHAT THEY WANTED TO COVER IN JC, BUT THAT PRIMIN HAS PRETTY CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT HE WANTS DISCUSSED WHETHER IN JC OR ELSEWHERE IN WASHINGTON. THEIR IDEAS RE JC MAY WELL CRYSTALLIZE INTO SOMETHING MORE DEFINITE BEFORE MAY2, AND DEPT MAY THEREFORE WANT TO BE ALERT TO ANY DEVELOPMENTS THAT MAY TAKE PLACE BETWEEN NOW AND THEN WITHIN DELEGATION. DELEGATION DID SEE SCHEDULE FOR ENTIRE

VISIT BEFORE IT LEFT, AND WERE PLEASED WITH IT. NO ONE WAS SUGGESTING ANY CHANGES RE JC MEETING, NOR DO WE THINK ANYONE WILL, OTHER THAN PERHAPS, AS INDICATED PARA TWO ABOVE, A SUGGESTION THAT JC MEETING BE RECONVENED AFTERNOON MAY 2 TO ACCOMMODATE BROADER AGENDA.

5. HAMED AMMAR, DIRECTOR OF DCI AND MEMBER OF DELEGATION WHO UNREACHABLE DURING DAYS JUST PRIOR HIS DEPARTURE YESTERDAY, TOLD CHARGE AT LAST SECOND AT AIRPORT THAT HE BELIEVED MUSTAPHA ZAAOUNI, MINISTER ATTACHED TO PRIME MINISTRY IN CHARGE OF PLANNING WOULD TAKE OVER FOR TUNISIANS AT JC MEETING AFTER OPENING CEREMONIES. BE REDJEB DID NOT KNOW WHETHER NOUIRA OR CHATTI WOULD BE TUNISIAN CO-CHAIRMAN. SAID HE THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE DETERMINED IN THE STATES AFTER DISCUSSION WITH AMB HEDDA.

6. RE PARA FIVE REFTTEL, EMBASSY HAS NO FURTHER COMMENT. QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC POINTS DURING US PRESENTATION, SHOULD BE DISCUSSED DIRECTLY WITH AMBASSADOR.
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